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Legislation_____

FOIA exemption bill still concerns ANPA

A bill to exempt some CIA "operational" files from the Freedom of Information Act needs more refinement, a representative of ANPA and the American Society of Newspaper Editors told a House subcommittee.

Charles S. Rowe said legislation passed by the Senate in November is an improvement over what originally was proposed, but he said several provisions need further work [presstime, Dec. 1983, p. 15]. Rowe, editor and co-publisher of The Free Lance-Star in Fredericksburg, Va., testified Feb. 8 before the Subcommittee on Legislation of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

The CIA wants the exemption for operational files because it would help relieve CIA informants' fears that they risk exposure under the FOIA. A CIA representative said the bill should result in a reduction of the current two-to-three-year

wait for responses to FOIA requests. The exemption would not create any "meaningful loss of information now (being) released" under the FOIA, he said.

Rowe said that "a degree of concern remains" that the Senate-passed bill could deny information that is now available. He urged the subcommittee to "take a fresh and careful look" at this question.

He also recommended that the subcommittee:

- Strengthen the judicial review provision
- Strengthen a provision requiring continued search and review of files that were examined in an official investigation of illegality or impropriety
- Include language requiring the CIA to streamline the processing of FOIA requests and to reduce the backlog.

The subcommittee is expected to act on the legislation by mid-March. □



The Newspaper Guild

Petitions signed by more than 6,500 journalists supporting a stronger FOIA are presented to congressional leaders of the effort. From left, Guild President Charles A. Perlik Jr., Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Rep. Glenn English (D-Okla.) and SPJ/SDX President Phil Record.